

VIEWS FROM THE WATCH TOWER.

DISBELIEF IN A FUTURE LIFE DANGEROUS.

PROFESSOR GOLDWIN SMITH notes the fact that the tendency of our times is to destroy faith in a future life, or, as the Professor states it, faith in immortality. (We need not quarrel over terms, especially when the Professor's use of the word immortality, though less exact than our own, is the usual, the customary one in our day. In his use of this word, he is in accord with the teachings of the Scripture, – that God has provided a *future life*, through a resurrection, for every member of Adam's race.) We give extracts from his article, which was published in *The North American Review*, as follows: –

"It would seem that we have come practically to a point at which – evolution and the higher criticism having between them done the work of demolition, and the work of reconstruction, if it is ever to be done, being still in the future – no small part of educated mankind has renounced or is gradually renouncing the hope of a future life and acting on the belief that death ends all.

"A general contraction of views to the man's own life must apparently be the consequence of the conviction that this life is all. A man of sense will probably be inclined to let reforms alone, and to consider how he may best go through the brief journey of life with comfort, if possible with enjoyment to himself and in pleasant intercourse with his fellowmen. High social or political aspirations, or high aspirations of any kind, will hardly survive the disillusion.

"We have an interest in our own children. But otherwise what interest have we in the generations that are to come after us on which a religion of humanity can be founded? It is not a very lively interest that we feel even in the remoter members of the human race, to say

nothing of those in the next street. Yet these exist; and of their existence we are conscious, and are reminded by the electric cable. Of the existence of future generations, supposing there is no future life, we shall not be conscious, and, therefore, for us they will not exist. We cannot even say with absolute certainty that they will exist at all. The end of man's dwelling-place and, therefore, of all human progress, science tells us, will be a physical catastrophe; and there are even those who seem to think that this catastrophe may be forestalled by a recurrence of the glacial era. Natural law, which science bids us venerate, departs, it must be remembered, with the lawgiver. Nothing remains but physical forces without a guiding mind, the play of which it is impossible to forecast. As to posthumous fame, it would be an arrant delusion, even if one man in a million could hope to obtain it.

"Whatever conduces to the enjoyment and prolongation of this life will probably be sought more energetically than before. Material progress, therefore, may quicken its pace. Nor is it likely that men will be quite so ready as they are now to throw away their lives in war. At present the soldier in facing **[R3411 : page 243]** death is probably sustained by a notion, however dim and vague, of a reward for the performance of his duty.

"It can hardly be doubted that hope of compensation in a future state, for a short measure of happiness here, though it may have been somewhat dim, has materially helped to reconcile the less favored members of the community to the inequalities of the existing order of things. The vanishing of that hope can scarcely fail to be followed in the future by an increased impatience of inequality, and a growing determination not to put off the indemnity to another world. In fact, this is already visible in the spirit and language of labor agitation. Serious problems of this kind seem to wait the coming generation.

"It would not be surprising if in this dissolution of the ancient faith and failure of familiar supports, there were to be a partial reaction in favor of churches which, like the Roman Catholic or the

Eastern Church, can pretend to offer the assurance of authority and to still the disquieting voice of reason while they lap the disturbed soul in the soothing element of [R3411 : page 244] religious esthetics. A tendency of this kind is already seen in ritualism, which bids the doubting take refuge in the sacerdotalism and sacramentalism of the Middle Ages. But such a back-stream of opinion and sentiment would, of course, not be lasting."

He concludes, "After all, great is our ignorance, and there may be something yet behind the veil."

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The Professor is an astute thinker and reasoner. He sees the trend of our times; he sees the advancing wave of unbelief which as a flood is even now increasingly sweeping over Christendom.

The Lord's Word has forewarned us of present conditions (Isa. 28:14-20; 29:9-16; Psa. 91:7) and has cautioned us to "put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand in this evil day" (Eph. 6:11); and now, as predicted, the "fire" of this day is trying every man's work. (I Cor. 3:13.) Alas! how many have been building up in themselves and others faith in human traditions and creeds which now are "wood, hay and stubble" in the devouring flame of "higher criticism." Alas! how few have built up their own faith and that of others with the "gold, silver and precious stones" of divine Truth.

However, in this also "we sorrow not as others who have no hope." As we behold many falling away from a position they occupied only nominally anyway, and from a faith that was never more than superficial, and from a worship in which they drew near the Lord in lip service without the heart, we rejoice that for such the present "shaking" (Heb. 12:26) means not eternal torment nor even "Second Death," but an awful experience in this life which, under divine Providence, may work out for them a blessing during the Millennium.

Prof. Smith sees what the Scriptures so clearly show, – that the loss of faith at the end of this age will have much to do with the precipitation of the great time of trouble and anarchy with which this age is to finish. He sees this selfishness already manifesting itself as the Scriptures foretold it would do. – I Tim. 3:1-5.

CHURCH AND STATE IN FRANCE.

Under the "*Concordat*," of long standing between the French government and the Papacy, France out of revenues and taxes has paid salaries to the Roman Catholic priests, bishops, etc. It is generally conceded that this arrangement will be dissolved about the first of next year. If so the support of religion will probably depend on *voluntary* contributions, as in this country. Roman Catholics assume that this will be a great blow to religious institutions: they seem to have little confidence in voluntary religion.

Nor are the Roman Catholics alone in their fears for the future; for as Protestants and Jews received like treatment in France the cancelation of the Papal "*Concordat*" is expected to mean a similar cutting off of Jews and Protestants from financial support. The twelve Jewish consistories of France and Algeria receive 220,000 francs (\$44,000), or from 1800 to 5000 francs to each rabbi or minister. The Hebrews are, of course, somewhat agitated respecting this loss, and as to how fully it would be compensated for in voluntary donations.

The various Protestant ministers are perturbed even more than the rabbis and are calling for some kind of federative union among themselves, and the "Fraternal Committee" has been appealed to – to see that the interests of the Reformed churches be taken care of in the parliamentary action on the proposed separation. France has been paying annually to Protestant ministers 1,500,000 francs (\$300,000).

A few Protestants seem to take the proper view of the matter – that such support from the world is contrary to the best interests of

true religion. Thus, gradually, France is getting ready for the great wave of "trouble such as was not since there was a nation."

THE ANTAGONISM BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIALISM.

"M. Anatole Le Roy-Beaulieu, in a recent lecture delivered at Harvard, one of a series dealing with religion and democracy, commented on the antagonism between Christianity and socialism. Socialism, he admitted, is founded upon a love of humanity, and many of its elements are to be found in Christianity. Their ideals have much in common. 'The aspiration of the socialist is the renovation of society: that is also the Christian ideal. Montesquieu, in the eighteenth century, marveled at the fact that Christianity, preoccupied as it is with the affairs of the other world, has contributed so evidently and so much to the improvement of the life upon earth.' Yet, in spite of these analogies, M. Leroy-Beaulieu discovers differences so radical between the spirit of Christianity and the spirit of socialism that he believes their conflict to be vital. On this subject he said further, according to the report of his lecture in the Boston *Evening Transcript*: –

"Christians and religious men in general have as their object the improvement of conditions. Communist ideas are indeed found in the Church – as we have seen in an earlier lecture. But until the present collectivist ideas have succeeded in the Church only in monasteries, in convents, in sects which are founded upon contempt for the world. So Saint Francis of Assisi, for example, might be cited as a kind of socialist or democrat. But what was his ideal? The conquest of riches? On the contrary, poverty was the first article of his profession and the virtue that he chiefly preached. This is far indeed from the idea of modern socialism. What the socialist of to-day [R3411 : page 245] wants – if not for himself, then to divide among others – is the world's money.

"Again, there is a vast difference in the methods as well as in the ideas of socialism and Christianity. We mean, of course, the general spirit of Christianity. We do not include all Christians in our generalization. The spirit of Christianity's method is one of love toward God and man. Charity is the great idea – did not some one say the only innovation? – of Christianity. Christ's words were, 'Peace be with you.' This was no working formula, no catch-word. It was genuine. Christ toiled for peace. Not so the modern socialist. Peace may be their ultimate object, but it is a peace which can be attained only by means of war. In the modern socialist's conception of the word, Napoleon himself fought for peace. None of the socialists tend to any other method. French, Italians, Germans, Russians – so they be socialists – are unanimous that the only way to establish the peace they aim at is through a war of classes. M. Jaures, the poet-politician, is a type of the class.

"It follows that socialists as a body oppose the doctrines of love and of long suffering that characterize men of religion. The calming of class strife, the appeasing of civic tempests by the oil of charity does not appeal to them. Religion, according to Jaures, is '*une vieille chanson*' – the cradle song that lulled the restlessness of old. It is not the martial music which is needed for the battles civilization has to fight today.

"Far deeper than appears at first sight lies the gulf that separates Christianity and socialism. The socialist has his religion, but it is neither Judaism nor Christianity. These faiths place their ideal in another world – to turn men's eyes to the treasures in heaven was the object of their teaching. Socialism – the religion of positivism and materialism – pins its faith to the treasures of earth. It is not hard to appreciate the reasons why a man who regards his life on earth as a brief trial is willing to submit with patience to injustice. For the socialist it is different; for him this world is everything. It is manifestly incumbent upon the socialist leaders, then, to snatch from the masses every semblance of belief in a world to come. There is but

one expedient for them: if they are to remove the hope of a heavenly paradise, they must compensate, they must offer an earthly paradise in its place.'

"The religious plan, the lecturer continued, is to develop not war, but love among men, and by means of that love for the fraternity, which is the proposed aim of the socialists themselves. 'Christianity, then, has the better methods for attaining the socialistic ideals; and thus, after all, socialism, if it means what it professes, makes a serious mistake in its warfare upon Christianity."

– *Literary Digest.*

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN CATHOLICISM AND SOCIALISM.

"It is an indubitable fact that, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary, Europe is now decatholicizing herself. One might even go further with safety and say that she is dechristianizing herself. Slowly but surely, with the irresistible movement of a geological subsidence, faith is waning among the industrial workers, and even among the peasants. In Belgium, [R3412 : page 245] in France, in Germany, the workmen who follow no particular creed number hundreds of thousands – yes, millions – and as their hopes of any heavenly kingdom dissolve other hopes assert themselves with a growing intensity. Wherever free thought penetrates Socialism enters also.

"Frightened by the socio-industrial consequences of free thought, an increasing section of the rich class leans toward the church, and especially toward the Roman Catholic Church, which is regarded by all as the strongest bulwark of the capitalists' interest. The apparent clerical reaction is thus shown to be in fact a corollary of the decline of faith amongst the masses. But it is nevertheless true that the alliance of priest and capitalist, the coalition of spiritual and temporal power, against Socialism and free thought, furnishes the

conservative and reactionary parties with formidable means of action and constitutes the most redoubtable threat against the immediate future of European civilization. It is a contest between the Black International and the Red International. On the one hand are all those who hold that authority should descend from above, and who find in the Roman Catholic Church the most perfect expression of their ideal, the most inflexible guardian of their class privileges; on the other hand are those who insist that authority shall come from the people, and who, by the logic of circumstances, can found their hopes on nothing but Social Democracy."

– *New York Independent*.

THE STABILITY OF ZIONISM.

The death of Dr. T. Herzl, the principal leader of the "Zionist" movement among the Jews, is seemingly a serious loss – calculated to hinder the progress of the movement for the reestablishment in Palestine of a Jewish State under the protection or suzerainty of Turkey or the great powers of the world. However, from another standpoint it may do good – teaching those interested that they must trust not in man but in God. The time for regathering of faithful Jews to Palestine is due, according to the Scriptures, and it will not be long until the "door" of opportunity opens to them. The Lord is the real leader of the movement and he will guide in his own way. It is understood that Dr. Herzl looked with considerable favor upon the British Government's offer of all that the Jews at present desire, in a location far south of Palestine, in Africa. Dr. Herzl's continuance at the head of the movement might have proved inimical to the interests of the divine arrangement centered in Palestine. "Behold I will gather them out of all countries whither I have driven them....Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them." – Jer. 32:37-42; 31:27-40.

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